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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6618
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0557
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1531
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4623
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4091
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7647
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5206
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1209
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1097
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0072
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0992

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000970

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [ECPS](#) [PGOV](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMESE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO BLOCK INTERNET

REF: A. RANGOON 941

[1](#)B. RANGOON 718

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Classified By: Economic Officer Samantha A. Carl-Yoder for Reasons 1.4
(b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications and Myanmar Teleport, Burma's two internet service providers (ISPs), continue to block access to the internet, following a September 27 government order to cut service. Myanmar Teleport subscribers can still send email to other local subscribers, but the government continues to closely monitor all outgoing messages. Several businesses have access to the internet through IPSTAR, a broadband service provided through a Thai satellite, although they fear the GOB will pressure the Thais to cut service. The GOB has not yet identified those people who sent pictures and information about the violent crackdown on protestors, despite efforts. Telecommunications officials who are able to track down the bloggers have made a decision not to do so. End Summary.

Basic Internet Still Down

[1](#)2. (C) On September 27, the Burmese Government, in an effort to prevent pictures of violence against protestors from hitting the international news, ordered the two national internet service providers (ISPs) to shut down the Internet (Ref A). One provider, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPT), immediately shut down its operations, while the other, semi-private Myanmar Teleport (formally Bagan Cybertech), fully implemented the order on September 29. Both ISPs continue to tell their subscribers that they are working to fix problems with underwater cables, the cause for the service interruption. Internet cafes in Rangoon remain closed, and several cafe owners have lamented the loss of business and their livelihoods. The Government

does not care about the people, one owner complained.

¶3. (C) One Embassy contact who works in the telecommunications industry informed us that Myanmar Teleport customers still have the ability to send emails, albeit only to addresses within the country (those with an .mm designation). He cautioned that government officials are reading all emails carefully, particularly those with large attachments. As a result, it takes an average of three days to send an email domestically, and not all emails are received.

¶4. (C) Several businessmen have told us that despite the GOB's attempt to curtail internet services, they can still access the internet through IPSTAR broadband connections. Because IPSTAR is a satellite service based out of Thailand, the Burmese Government cannot shut down access, they explained. They did note their fear that the GOB may try to pressure the Thais to cut off service to Burma. While connectivity is quite good, IPSTAR is prohibitively expensive for most Burmese; it has less than 1,000 subscribers in Burma, most of which are businesses.

Bloggers' Identity Remains Unknown

¶5. (C) In Burma, the use of blogs to express views or disseminate information is not new, one Embassy contact explained. Blogs are cheap to maintain, and do not require a dedicated website. In 2006, a group of bloggers, working with the Myanmar Computer Professional Association, established the Myanmar Bloggers Society to organize blog enthusiasts from around the country. Currently, there are more than 100 Burmese blog websites, one-third of which are written in English. Of the 100 blogs, approximately 30 percent were anti-government, and 50 percent focused on

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general topics, such as music and entertainment. According to our contact, the government is working to shut down many of the English-language blogs that mention the recent crackdown on protestors. Many blogs have not been updated since September 27, although some dedicated bloggers have been bypassing the ban by dialing directly into Thailand for internet service.

¶6. (C) The Burmese Government has not yet discovered the identity of the bloggers who wrote about the senseless violence against monks and civilians, according to a private telecommunications official. In late September, government officials interrogated eight telecommunications engineers from Myanmar Teleport and MPT about the blogs. The engineers informed the government that it did not have the software, equipment, or ability to track the bloggers. Our contact, who is close to two of the engineers, noted that the engineers could ping the websites to track down the bloggers, but made a choice to not do so. To date, none of the anti-government bloggers have been identified, he stated.

Comment

¶7. (C) Despite the GOB's efforts to block the internet, graphic footage of attacks by security forces on protestors and innocent bystanders continues to find its way to the international media, due largely to the assistance Embassy Rangoon has provided local journalists and political activists who are bringing us their footage. People remain determined to show the world what is really happening in Burma, putting themselves in danger and going to great lengths to do so. Therefore, we will continue to assist them.

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